



**Insurance and Real Estate Committee
February 3, 2011**

FTK

Testimony of the American Cancer Society

SB 21 – An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Routine Patient Care Costs for Clinical Trial Patients

The American Cancer Society is in strong support of SB 21. This legislation would assure privately insured cancer patients access to the full range of clinical trials.

Clinical trials are a critical treatment option for current cancer patients and are also essential in our nation's efforts to win the war on cancer. Without clinical trials, new or improved treatments would languish in the laboratory, never reaching the patients who need them. Unfortunately, only a very small percent of cancer patients currently enroll in clinical trials. Part of the problem is that many health insurers refuse coverage for a patient's routine care costs if the patient enrolls in a clinical trial – effectively denying access to possibly life saving treatment.

SB 21 would remove this financial barrier by requiring health insurance plans to cover the same routine patient care costs that they would cover if the patient were receiving standard therapy. This bill does not require the health plans to cover the cost of the drug under investigation or research-related costs. The American Cancer Society strongly supports this legislation as it will provide cancer patients with the assurance that their health plan benefits and services – items which are covered under their monthly premiums – will not be taken away simply because they have enrolled in a clinical trial.

Since 2000, Medicare beneficiaries with serious and life threatening diseases have had access to the full range of clinical trials. We are pleased that this legislation will mirror the Medicare benefit in that it covers the full range of cancer clinical trials and relies on the Medicare definition of routine patient care costs.

The diagnosis of cancer is devastating – patients must not only confront an array of medical decisions, they must cope with the financial and emotional burdens as well. Once again, we commend the members of this committee for your leadership on this critical issue, by seeking to reduce some of the financial worries of cancer patients as they consider their treatment options. We look forward to working with you to assure that these barriers are removed this year.

Please support SB 21.

####